

Missouri

No matter how humble your source
trickling from Rocky springs to confluence at Three Forks
or how generous your mouth
still feeding St. Louis long after the French first feasted,
it is neither heritage nor inheritance that define your course
but instead prairie swells side-bending your spine
and plains rains engorging your veins.

An undercut bank capsizes a cottonwood
only to sediment downstream
to be tiled by seedlings.

A kingfisher hovers and dives
scattering gar fry into your murky depths
to commence their immense descent back to sea.

A line of skunks ascend at dawn
bluffing big-footed bobkittens back into their den
and away from ever-oncoming high beams.

What begins as a downhill race
is diverted by circumstance and chance,
muddles, meanders,
and eventually marches
to the rhythm of lives nourished
and the drums of gravity
incessantly rolling you home.